

5 May 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Production of Military Estimates

1. Your memorandum of 4 May about the procedures you wish followed in the preparation of this year's round of military estimates raises certain questions on which I feel a need for further clarification and guidance before taking the next steps you indicate.

2. One main problem is this: a sentence in your fourth paragraph says that "responsibility would also remain with the Board . . . for producing a final Agency draft and seeing it through USIB coordination." Another sentence says that the "preparation and staffing" of the basic part of the Estimate should be assigned to OSR, OSI, and FMSAC.

3. On the one hand, you may intend less basic change than at first appears. For years the estimates have rested primarily on the contributions received from these CIA offices, together with materials submitted by DIA, NSA, the three services, GMAIC, and JAEIC. This year, since far more detail will be put into the papers, we had contemplated that much of the drafting of technical and lengthy annexes would be done in other offices. Perhaps a good deal of the text of the estimates would also be taken verbatim from contributions; indeed some customarily is. We had arranged a meeting today to discuss the whole matter with representatives from the other CIA offices; I have postponed this session.

4. But if you wish virtually the complete draft to be written in other offices I would have serious misgivings. I believe that the Estimates would suffer in balance and coherence if they consisted simply of a series of pieces from various hands, strung together in one document. In this connection I attach copies of outlines that we had worked up for the four principal papers; if outlines like these were to be followed, the chance of getting a well-integrated set of papers merely by patching together sections written in several offices would, in my view, be slight. And I am not clear that this is really the method you envisage.

5. Moreover it has always been a function of the Board -- indeed its central function -- to question and examine the judgments which appear in contributions. There are often conflicting opinions in these submissions; there are also occasions when a judgment contributed turns out after rigorous discussion to be untenable, or at least to require qualification. Your memorandum could be read to indicate that this deliberative process would be discontinued. But it is only after it has been gone through and the draft adjusted as may be indicated that the Board Chairman and his colleagues feel prepared to preside effectively over coordination with the other agencies. In this agency coordination the Board Chairman derives considerable advantage from occupying an impartial role, on behalf of the DCI in his character as Chairman of the USIB, and not simply acting as representative of a CIA position on all issues.

6. Finally, as regards the estimative judgments themselves, your memorandum can also be read to mean that this office is to do no more than summarize the estimates -- including the five-year projections, judgments on strategic objectives, political and economic factors, etc. -- already formulated by other CIA offices. This appears to be little more than a secretarial function, hardly justifying the existence of the Board at all.

7. In sum, the proposed arrangements seem to imply a basic change in the entire role of the Board and ONE and the concepts underlying the NIE process. I am sorry that I had no opportunity to participate in some of the discussions and deliberations out of which it grew, for I think the issue deserves to be discussed in principle and should not be decided by what may appear to be simply a limited procedural measure to meet an immediate problem. The changes we contemplate in the scope and character of the estimates this year would in my view be accomplished more effectively under the present working arrangements -- i.e., with CIA producing offices as principal contributors and as original drafters of technical and descriptive annexes -- than by the radical shift of responsibility which your memorandum appears to involve.

ABBOT SMITH
Director
National Estimates